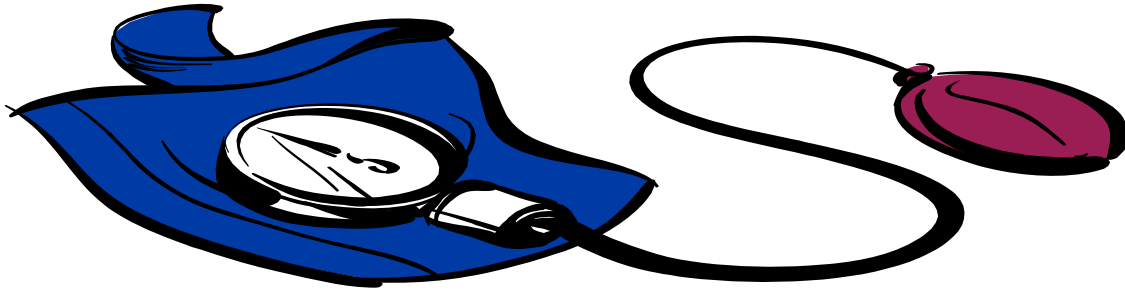


Hypertension



Hypertension is another term for high blood pressure. It is defined as having a blood pressure at or above 140/90 mmHg. If you have either diabetes or chronic kidney disease, hypertension is defined as a blood pressure at or above 130/80 mmHg. You can have high blood pressure if either or both numbers are higher than the recommended level.

Hypertension is sometimes called “the silent killer” because there are often no symptoms. If left untreated, it can cause the heart to get larger, which can lead to heart failure. It can also cause problems in the kidneys, eyes, heart, and blood vessels throughout the body.

Like most diseases, hypertension has a genetic influence. Genes do not cause hypertension; however, they can increase the chance that someone will develop high blood pressure. If you have a parent, sibling, or grandparent with hypertension, you are at higher risk for this disease. Other risk factors include being:

- overweight
- a man over the age of 45
- a woman over the age of 55
- someone with blood pressure between 120 – 130 / 80 – 89 mmHg

Because of the serious risks associated with hypertension, it is important to have your blood pressure taken regularly. Your doctor will want to know if you eat a high salt diet, drink alcohol, and are physically active. He will also want to know what medications you are taking, your stress level, and if you smoke. All of these factors may cause your blood pressure to rise.

If your doctor tells you that you have high blood pressure, there are many treatment options. Medications or a change in your diet are often the first treatments. Discussing treatment options with your doctor will help him or her find the appropriate treatment for you.

For more information on hypertension, please visit the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.